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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF JAPAN SUBSEQUENT TO THE MEIJI RESTORATION

By EIJIRO HONJO

In the course of an article entitled "the development of the study of economic history in Japan", published in this journal, vol. VII, No. 2, I dwelt at some length on the development of such studies since the Meiji Restoration. In the present article, I intend to discuss the same subject more fully from a different point of view. In a study of this kind, the citation of the titles of many books is really necessary, but as references of this kind may prove more annoying than helpful to some readers, I shall refrain from such mention as far as possible, confining myself to an analysis of the general course of development which the study of the economic history of Japan has taken.

The study of the economic history of Japan has seen remarkable progress since the Meiji Restoration. Needless to say, the study of this subject is related to the development of political economy, on the one hand, and reflects the concrete developments of the economic world, on the other. The interval under review may roughly be divided into three periods. The first period extends from the Meiji Restoration to the Sino-Japanese War, the second from the termination of the Sino-Japanese War to the World War, and the third from 1919 or 1920 to 1936, or year preceding the outbreak of the China Affair.

The first period. In the reforms which featured the Meiji Restoration, many old systems and theories were discarded and Western systems and forms of civilization were imported in their place. In consequence, widespread

unrest and popular uncertainty prevailed in the country during the ten years which followed upon the Meiji Restoration. In the second year of Meiji (1869), the Government established a History Bureau, which instituted a search for missing volumes of historical works and made an effort to collect other historical materials; and in 1877, a Historiographical Bureau was set up within the Government. The leading historical books published in the intervening period were the *Fukkoki* 復古記 (History of the Restoration) and the *Meiji Shiyo* 明治史要 (Outline of the History of Meiji). The publication about this time of the *Nippon Kaika Shoshi* 日本開化小史 (Short History of Japanese Civilization) by Taguchi-Ukichichi (published between 1877 and 1892), in which the author dealt with the development of Japanese culture with the aid of his knowledge of European affairs and from the economic point of view, inaugurated a new era in the study of economic history in this country. In 1879, the work of compiling the *Koji Ruien* 古事類苑 was taken in hand. Since then, the study of history has made steady progress.

No book worthy of special mention was written during the first ten years of Meiji dealing with the economic history of Japan. It is true that a few books were written by individual scholars, but none was of any special value. During the following ten years, however, various Government offices devoted much energy to the compilation of such material, with the result that many books were published. This official enthusiasm for publication is ascribable to various causes. In order to introduce new systems, it was necessary to investigate the systems operating in advanced Western countries, on the one hand, and to consider the history and traditions of this country, on the other. Moreover, it was feared that unless the work of compilation was undertaken speedily, much valuable historical material might be lost. That symposiums were undertaken from such motives can easily be deduced from the reasons given for the compilation of the *Dai Nippon Kahei Shi* 大日本貨幣史 (History of Japanese Currency) and the *Koji Ruien*. The Finance Department

evinced more enthusiasm and energy than any other Government office in this task of compilation, and published many treatises in addition to the *Dai Nippon Kahei Shi* and the *Dai Nippon Sozei Shi* 大日本租税志 (History of Taxation in Japan).

The fact that the Government concerned itself directly with the compilation of such books did much to stimulate private research after the twenties of the Meiji Era, and contributed much to the development of Japanese civilization, just as the Government's policy of guidance in industrial matters served to awaken the nation to the importance of industry and did much to encourage industrial development. The method of study adopted in those days is, however, out-of-date. It consisted, in many cases, in a mere chronological array of facts without any serious attempt to elucidate the connection between cause and effect in the study of economic phenomena. Many of the books compiled in those days are nevertheless of great value, as they contain much historical material and as their authors took great pains to present facts in their true light.

As already noted, no book worthy of special attention was published by an individual scholar during the first ten years of the Meiji Era. This is true also of the next ten years. This is presumably partly due to the fact that the distinguished scholars of the day were mostly employed on Government assignments in connection with the compilation of historical documents, but the main cause for this neglect is to be found in the fact that at a time so soon after the Meiji Restoration, business enterprise had not yet made any progress to speak of and consequently little attention was generally directed to the study of economic history—a kind of history which, after all, differs somewhat from ordinary history in character. The situation altered, however, in the twenties of the Meiji Era, when many important books were published by individual scholars, as, for instance, the *Dai Nippon Fudosanho Enkakushi* 大日本不動産沿革史 (History of the Real Estate Laws in Japan) by Yokoi-Tokifuyu, the

Shoenko 莊園考 (Study in *Shoen*) by Kurita-Hiroshi, the *Nippon Zaiseishi* 日本財政史 (History of Japanese Finance) by Hagino-Yoshiyuki, the *Nippon Shogyoshi* 日本商業史 (History of Commerce in Japan) by Endo-Yoshiki, and the *Dai Nippon Shogyoshi* 大日本商業史 by Suganuma-Sadakaze.

In short, during the preliminary ten or twenty years of the first period, publications of this kind were mostly undertaken by Government offices, and only in the subsequent years did there gradually appear books written by individual scholars. Government offices continued to publish books throughout this latter period also. A prominent feature of this period was thus the publication of numerous works by Government offices, and I have elsewhere referred to it as the "Age of Official Publication." As in the business world, this was a period of preparation for the development of capitalism, so too, in the study of economic history, it was a time of preparation for the succeeding period in which this branch of study became established.

The second period. After the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese capitalistic economy made remarkable progress. The period prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War was the first period and the interval between the Russo-Japanese War and the World War the second period of true industrial development. So far as the study of the economic history of Japan is concerned, the foundations for the scientific study of this subject were laid about the 30th year of Meiji, after which, paralleling concrete progress in the economic sphere, this study witnessed further progress, as did also the study of general social sciences. We may say then that it was in this period that the study of the economic history of Japan was firmly established.

One of chief features of this period is the fact that the foundations were laid for the scientific study of the economic history. With the importation of Western science, there was a gradual improvement in the methods of research. Descriptive methods were also improved. The antiquated chronological method and other unscientific methods were

gradually abandoned and new methods were adopted which made clear the causes and effects of events in a scientific manner. The fact that Dr. Uchida wrote certain articles about 1897 in which he expatiated on the meaning of economic history, discussed the proper method of study and discoursed on historical materials contributed greatly towards the establishment of the study of economic history. The Doctor graduated from the College of Literature of Tokyo Imperial University in July, 1896, and in the same year entered the Post-Graduate Course of the University, where he chose for his theses the economic history of Japan and the educational value of historiology and political economy. In Vol. 9, No. 1 of the *Shigaku Zasshi* 史學雜誌 (Historiological Magazine), issued in January, 1898, he published an article entitled "On the nature and scope of economic history." In those days, the term *keizai-shi* 經濟史 (economic history) was quite unknown in Japan, and he was probably the first Japanese to use it. The terms *shogyo-shi* 商業史 (commercial history) and *sangyo-shi* 産業史 (industrial history) were in use from an earlier age, but the term *keizai-shi* (economic history) was not then in use. The list compiled in March, 1899, of Japanese and Chinese books kept in the Library attached to Tokyo Imperial University contains one item of classification called *keizai-shi* (economic history), while a book entitled the *Keizai-shi-gan* 經濟史眼 (The Viewpoint of Economic History) was written by Dr. Tajiri in 1899. It seems likely, therefore, that the term "*keizai-shi*" was finding wider currency about that time. Dr. Uchida used it somewhat earlier, in 1896. The term *keizaigaku-shi* 經濟學史 (history of economics) was in use from a much earlier date, however. It occurs in an article written by Sugakita-Wasaburo in 1890. Even in the forties of the Meiji era, people generally did not know the difference in meaning between the history of economics and economic history, and confounded one with the other.

Dr. Uchida was appointed a lecturer of the College of Literature of Tokyo Imperial University and held a chair in

the economic history of Japan. His lectures on this subject were probably the first of the kind to be given at a Japanese University. This is a fact which is worthy of special mention in tracing the history of the development of the subject in Japan. That his lectures were of considerable value and interest can easily be gathered from the reminiscences of Dr. Ishibashi, who attended them. As already noted, the Doctor often discoursed on the nature and methods of study in economic history, and the *Keizaishi Soron* 經濟史總論 (General Principles of Economic History), which was published in March, 1912, embodies the results of his study of the subject in a condensed form. It is also noteworthy that he published many articles on the theoretical aspects of general historiology.

The second feature of the period is the growth of the generalized approach to the study of the economic history of Japan. That is to say, much scholastic effort was expended, not merely on a study of a specific aspect, but upon a review the general trends of economic development in Japan. The *Nippon Shogyo-shi* 日本商業史 (Commercial History of Japan) and the *Nippon Kogyo-shi* 日本工業史 (Industrial History of Japan) by Dr. Yokoi-Tokifuyu, the *Keizai-shi* 經濟史 (Economic History) by Dr. Uchida, and *Die gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung in Japan* by Dr. Fukuda may be mentioned as notable examples of scholastic efforts in this direction.

Dr. Yokoi wrote many valuable books. His book entitled the *Dai Nippon Fudosanho Enkakushi* (History of the Real Estate Laws of Japan) was published in 1888, and in 1892, he wrote the *Teikoku Shogyo-shi Kogiroku* 帝國商業史講義錄 (Transcript of Lectures on the Commercial History of Japan). In 1898, he wrote the *Nippon Kogyo-shi* and the *Nippon shogyo-shi*, in 1900, the *Nippon Shogyo-shi Ishingo-no-bu* 日本商業史維新後の部 (Post-Restoration Commercial History of Japan) and in 1904, the *Nippon Shokusanshi* 日本殖産史 (History of the Development of Production in Japan). The *Teikoku Shogyoshi Kogiroku* deals not only with commercial matters

but with matters relative to industry, weights and measures, communications, currency and finance. Matters bearing on mining, marine products and agriculture are touched upon also. Presumably, this publication supplied the basis for his subsequent works, in particular the *Nippon Kogyo-shi* and the *Nippon Shogyo-shi*. Needless to say, the best known among his books are the *Nippon Kogyo-shi* and the *Nippon Shogyo-shi*. In these two works the Doctor evidently sought to present the economic history of Japan in general outlines. They were certainly epoch-making publications, which established his fame as one of the pioneers in the study of the economic history of Japan.

Dr. Uchida also discoursed on the economic history of Japan in a general way in the *Keizai-shi* contained in the Transcript of Lectures delivered at the Tokyo Semmon Gakko, published about 1898. As this *Keizai-shi* is not included in his Complete Works, many people are ignorant of the fact of its publication. It is an octavo book consisting of 128 pages, and elucidating in outline of the economic history of Japan. The contents comprise an introduction, and four chapters: chapter 1 being devoted to the remote ages, chapter 2 dealing with the Nara and Heian periods, chapter 3 the Kamakura and Muromachi periods and chapter 4 the Edo period. There are some references to conditions in the Meiji era also. Doctor Uchida's original intention was to lecture on the economic history of China and of Western countries as well, but this plan did not materialize. In 1902, a Transcript of Lectures entitled the *Nippon Keizai-shi* 日本經濟史 (Economic History of Japan) was published, but it contains, besides the introduction, only a few items from the general view of conditions in the remote periods, and touches upon the increase of population and the development of agriculture. The *Nippon Keizai-shi Gaiyo* (Outline of the Economic History of Japan), which was presumably written by the Doctor in the early years of Taisho, appears at the beginning of the volume entitled the *Nippon Keizai-shi no Kenkyu* 日本經濟史の研究 (Study of the

Economic History of Japan) among his Complete Works.

Dr. Fukuda's book in German entitled *Die gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung in Japan* was published in 1900. As its title indicates, the book deals, in a general way, with the social and economic development of Japan, but what the author intended chiefly to enunciate here was the fact that the course of the social and economic development in Japan coincides with that of Europe. Moreover, it deals with many matters more intimately concerned with legislation than with economics. Nor does it cover all the important problems arising in a consideration of the economic history of Japan. Yet, it cannot be denied that it contributed greatly to the development of the study of the economic history of this country. It seems that the publication of the Japanese translation, with the title of *Nippon Keizaishi Ron* 日本經濟史論 by Sakanishi-Yoshizo in April, 1907, served to arouse still wider interest among the reading public in Dr. Fukuda's book.

The third feature of the period is that the study of special branches of economic history showed marked progress. That is to say, the field of research was so extended that a wide variety of subjects was made the object of study. In consequence, many researches of a highly specialized nature were undertaken and valuable findings published, a fact which testifies eloquently to the general progress witnessed throughout this period in the study of the economic history of Japan. The progress made in this direction can easily be grasped, if one takes the trouble to compare the titles of the books published in this period with those published in the previous period. Of peculiar interest are the *Nippon Seimei Hokengyo-shi* 日本生命保險業史 (History of Life Insurance in Japan), published in 1904, the *Nippon no Keizai to Bukkyo* 日本の經濟と佛教 (Japan's Economy and Buddhism), published in 1912, the *Nippon Ginko Enkakushi* 日本銀行沿革史 (History of the Bank of Japan), published in 1913, the *Beika Hendo-shi* 米價變動史 (History of Fluctuations in the Price of Rice), published in 1914, and the *Shajiryo Seishitsu no Kenkyu* 社寺領性質

の研究 (Study in the Nature of Shrine and Temple Estates), published in 1914. The results of numerous research into the history of local economic conditions were also made public. The *Osaka Shi-shi* 大阪市史 (History of Osaka) which abounds in references to facts of economic value, was also published in this period.

The fourth feature of the period is that the publication of source materials for economic history started in it. It is true that the publication of ordinary historiographical materials had been taking place for many years. For instance, the *Kokushi Taikei* 國史大系 was published in between 1898 and 1904, and the *Kaitei Shiseki Shuran* 改定史籍集覽 from 1900 to 1903, but it was not until this period that materials with a direct bearing on economic history were published serially. Dr. Takimoto's *Nippon Keizai Sosho* 日本經濟叢書 (Library of Japanese Economy) of 36 volumes was published between 1914 and 1917; the *Tsuzoku Keizai Bunko* 通俗經濟文庫 (Popular Library of Economy), consisting of 12 volumes, in 1916 and 1917; and three volumes of the *Tokugawa Jidai Shogyo Sosho* 徳川時代商業叢書 (Library of Commerce in the Tokugawa Age) in 1913 and 1914. It is hardly necessary to say that the *Nippon Keizai Sosho* was an epoch-making publication, and this, together with the other publications referred to, did much to help forward the study of economic history and the history of economic thought.

In short, many valuable books were published in this period by eminent scholars such as Drs. Yokoi, Uchida, Fukuda and Takimoto. Dr. Miura-Hiroyuki also made public the valuable results of his study of the economic history. Due to the efforts of these pioneers, the foundations of this branch of learning were firmly laid in this period, and the scientific study of the economic history of Japan thereafter made steady progress.

The third period. During the World War, the Japanese economic world witnessed an unprecedented and remarkable progress. It was overtaken by a disastrous depression about 1920, however, with a consequent deterioration in social and

economic conditions. In the meantime, however, the study of the economic history of Japan continued to make steady progress. Progress was most marked in discussions of social and economic systems and the class problem. More research associations were formed and more professional magazines were published. As compared with the previous period, more and better books were also published.

In this period, too the general study of economic history witnessed further growth, and many books giving a bird's-eye view of the economic history of Japan were written by noted scholars, the results of many exhaustive and painstaking programmes of researches on special subjects were made public, the study of provincial economic history saw a more vigorous development, the tendency to attach importance to the economic history approach became more marked in the histories compiled in many provinces, and there was an ever more copious publication of historical source materials.

Among the other features of the period, a considerable interest in the study of social economic history claims first mention. To particularize the attention of many students was directed to the study of the social system and the economic organism. In the field of social history, Dr. Miura's *Kokushijo no Shakai Mondai* 國史上の社會問題 (Social Problems in the History of Japan) was published in 1920, and this was followed by the publication by other scholars of many books on the social history of Japan. Particularly numerous were the studies dealing with the history of agricultural life in Japan. In these books such topics as the life of the farmers, various agrarian problems and the peasants' riots were described in detail. Many treatises were also produced on the proletarian and social movements and on the development of capitalistic economy.

Works dealing with the materialistic conception of history should next be mentioned. A few important articles had already been published about forties of Meiji era, but there was a marked increase during this period in the number of books in which the material was treated from this particular point

of view. To be specific there was distinct advance, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the study of various subjects from the Marxian point of view. This tendency is easily discernible in the publication of the *Marx Shugi Koza* マルクス主義講座 in 1927 and 1928, of the *Nippon Shihon Shugi Hattatsushi Koza* 日本資本主義發達史講座 in 1932, and of the magazine called the *Rekishi Kagaku* 歴史科學 (Science of History), and also in many books and articles published in this period by scholars belonging to the Marxian school. There was much controversy regarding the propriety or otherwise of the application of this theory of economic history. Towards the end of the period, however, the Marxian principles began to lose favour, due to certain changes that were taking place in social conditions.

Thirdly, the study of conditions in the closing days of the Tokugawa Shogunate and at the time of the Meiji Restoration evidenced a vigorous growth in this period—in the Showa era (which began in 1926) especially. In proof, we may refer to the publication of the series called the *Meiji Bunka Zenshu* 明治文化全集 and the *Meiji Zenki Zaisei Keizai Shiryo Shusei* 明治前期財政經濟史料集成, and of the books entitled the *Meiji Ishinshi Kenkyu* 明治維新史研究, the *Meiji Ishin Keizaishi Kenkyu* 明治維新經濟史研究, the *Ishin Noson Shakai Shiron* 維新農村社會史論, and the *Bakumatsu Keizaishi Kenkyu* 幕末經濟史研究 and other books. The post-Restoration development of the country was also a favourite subject of study, and the increasing attention of scholars was directed to an analysis of the economic and the financial history of the Meiji and Taisho eras.

Fourthly, certain journals of scientific societies interested in economic history, professional magazines, etc. began to be published. The *Keizaishi Kenkyukai* (Society for the Study of Economic History, which was later renamed the *Nippon Keizaishi Kenkyusho* or the Institute for Research in the Economic History of Japan) was established in 1929, and the first number of its monthly magazine called the *Keizaishi Kenkyu* 經濟史研究 was issued in November of the same year,

while the *Shakai Keizaishi Gakkai* (The Social and Economic History Society) started to issue its periodical, the *Shakai Keizaishigaku* 社會經濟史學, in May, 1931. The Waseda Daigaku Keizaishi Gakkai issued the first number of its *Keizaishigaku* 經濟史學, a semi-annual magazine, in April, 1935. The Keio Gijuku Keizaishi Gakkai issued the first number of its *Rekishi to Seikatsu* 歴史と生活 (History and Life) in October, 1937. Furthermore, the *Keizaishi Nenkan* 經濟史年鑑 (Economic History Year Book) has been coming out every year since 1932, and the *Nippon Keizaishi Jiten* 日本經濟史辭典 (Dictionary of the Economic History of Japan) has been published serially, the last instalment coming off the press in October, 1939. These facts bear witness to the steady progress realized in the study of economic history. Courses on the economic history of Japan thus became general, not only at the universities but in schools of collegiate status. Paralleling this development, students of the formal national history began to evince much interest in the economic history of their country, and the results of the research conducted by these historians in the economic history of Japan were made public. Another fact claiming attention is that, with the development of the study of local economic history, there was a corresponding increase in the number of books written by provincial historians.

Fifthly, the findings published in Japan in connection with the study of the economic history of the country attracted the attention of certain Western scholars. To such an extent was this true that the results of our research were often cited in their books, commented upon and even translated into their own languages.* This illustrates one more phase of the progress of this study of economic history in Japan, and one cannot but be deeply impressed by the remarkable development realized since the earlier years of the Meiji era,

* See, e. g. André Andréadés, *La Population du Japon 1931*; *Les Finances de l'Empire Japonais et leur Evolution 1932*.

when Japan began by importing her political economy from Western countries.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have now reviewed the development of the study of the economic history of Japan as planned. For convenience' sake, I have confined my attention mainly to books, to the exclusion of magazine articles. In discussing the third period, I have refrained from making any specific reference to the research conducted by individual scholars, contenting myself with a description of general trends. I believe, however, that I have made fairly clear the general course of the development of our study down to current times.

Although the study of the economic history of Japan has achieved such remarkable progress, that it may seem to form the main subject of historical study, we can hardly say that the time for collecting materials has actually passed. It will, no doubt, still be necessary for students to try to collect materials for themselves and to study original historical facts with care, instead of simply making use of the historical materials collected by others. Although the study of the subject by formal methods appears to have lost some ground lately, there is at the same time a strong tendency to-day to provide a more satisfactory theoretical basis for the science. Inasmuch as the economic development of Japan is obviously ascribable to the natural, human and social environment peculiar to this country, it is a foregone conclusion that efforts should be exerted to define these characteristics. That the elements contributing to the development of the economic culture characteristic of Japan need to be grasped clearly goes without saying. Japan's characteristic cultural qualities cannot be expressed by mere theorizing, however. They can be truly understood only by a thoroughgoing treatment based on scientific analysis and corroboration. It is to be hoped that by this means the essential nature of the economic development of Japan, both in its characteristic and unique traits and in its universality

may be elucidated and her economic development represented in its true light. In the event we may look forward with confidence to the further unfolding and development of the economic historiography of Japan.